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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES \$1.3 MILLION IN GRANTS TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TO TARGET GUN VIOLENCE

SACRAMENTO – United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) Special Agent-in-Charge John Torres joined with local law enforcement officials from Sacramento, Stockton and Stanislaus Counties to announce over \$1.3 million in federal grants to aid local agencies to combat gun violence. These funds are in addition to approximately \$1 million in funds to counties in the southern portion of the Central Valley. The grant funds were part of the United States Department of Justice's "Project Safe Neighborhoods" initiative, a three-year old program aimed at reducing gun violence nationwide.

A key component of Project Safe Neighborhoods has been to more aggressively pursue the prosecution of convicted felons illegally possessing firearms. In most instances, federal law brings with it considerably more severe sentences than comparable California law for these types of offenses. As a result, federal officials have worked closely with local prosecutors and law enforcement agencies to identify offenders whose criminal histories and dangers to the community warrant targeted federal prosecution. Since 2003, federal prosecutions for such crimes in the Eastern District of California have increased 92%. Said United States Attorney Scott, "The combination of a convicted felon and a firearm can be a lethal combination. We can effectively reduce gun violence by taking convicted felons with guns off the streets before they use those guns"

Another important aspect of Project Safe Neighborhoods is federal grant funding to local agencies to combat gun violence. At today's press conference, the United States Attorney's Office announced approximately \$1.3 million in funds to law enforcement agencies in Sacramento, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties to be expended over the next three years. In Sacramento and San Joaquin, funding was awarded to the Sacramento District Attorney's Office and the Stockton Police Department to support the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). NIBIN is a nationwide program through which ATF provides computers to local law enforcement agencies, permitting those agencies to enter data into a national database that can match recovered bullets and shell casings to firearms, thereby linking suspects and firearms to multiple crimes. ATF Special Agent-in-Charge John Torres, "As a result of this sophisticated firearm database, many an unsolvable crime will now become solvable."

In addition to NIBIN funding for the Sacramento region, the Sacramento Police Department was awarded \$120,000 for a Crime Mapping initiative, providing a valuable

analytical tool for recognizing crime patterns and developing targeted gun-violence prevention strategies.

San Joaquin County and the City of Stockton received ongoing funding to support its Operation Peacekeeper, with approximately \$230,000 in funds earmarked for a gang outreach worker. The outreach workers typically are former gang members, who provide counseling to high school students and current gang members about how to resist or separate from gang life. They also work to prevent outbreaks of gun violence between gangs by working to provide non-violent resolutions to gang disputes as they arise.

The Stockton Police Department was awarded approximately \$311,000 to fund a firearms examiner, whose responsibility is to conduct conclusive analysis on recovered ballistic evidence matched by the NIBIN system.

Additionally, the San Joaquin District Attorney's Office received approximately \$111,000 to continue funding for specialized gun-violence prosecutors received under earlier grants.

The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department and the Modesto Police Department received over \$300,000 to combat growing gang violence in the region. With these funds, each agency will authorize 500 hours of overtime to their law enforcement personnel per year for three years to specifically target gang offenses. Moreover, the agencies will share a full-time police clerk to input critical information into the state's CAL Gangs database, which allows for the centralization of information of organized criminal gang activity regionally and statewide. Stated Stanislaus County Sheriff Les Weidman, "Gang offenders in Modesto and throughout the county take note: We have just upped the ante in targeting gang violence in our communities in a big way."

A Project Safe Neighborhoods Selection Committee was established to solicit and review grant applications. The Selection Committee also made the final selection of which agencies were to receive grants. The committee was chaired by retired Redding Chief of Police Bob Blankenship; also serving on the committee were retired Executive Assistant United States Attorney Nancy Simpson and retired California Department of Corrections gang expert Brian Parry. This project was supported by Award No. 2004-GP-CX-0601 and 2004-GP-CX-0604 awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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